

VISION PLAN FOR THE EVANS & ROSEDALE BUSINESS AND CULTURAL DISTRICT

**Prepared for the
Evans & Rosedale Advisory Committee**

**By the
City of Fort Worth
Planning Department**

**Endorsed by the
Evans & Rosedale Advisory Committee
On October 16, 2000**

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INTRODUCTION

The Evans & Rosedale Business and Cultural District – bounded by Leuda Street on the north, Kentucky Avenue and Evans Avenue to the east, East Rosedale to the south, and I-35W to the west – links Southeast Fort Worth to the southern edge of Downtown and the eastern edge of the Medical District. This strategically located commercial district once served as the Fort Worth seat of African-American culture and a vibrant center of entertainment, office, retail, and other commercial services, not only for residential districts of Southeast Fort Worth but also for the city in general.

Over the last several years, a broad spectrum of community stakeholders have marshaled community input, financial, and other resources to bring back this district as a showcase of Fort Worth's rich African-American cultural heritage and a center of commerce. The Vision Plan for Evans & Rosedale outlines general strategies, redevelopment principals, and next steps to be taken in order to develop Evans & Rosedale.

A community planning process spearheaded by the Evans & Rosedale Advisory Committee, in partnership with the City of Fort Worth, helped generate redevelopment strate-



The July 2000 workshop, hosted by the Heritage Center Advisory Committee, provided the basis for the Vision Plan.

gies to rebuild Evans & Rosedale as a key commercial center and focal point of African-American culture. In July 2000, three nationally renowned consultants shared their expertise in the revitalization of urban commercial districts with resident, business, and other key stakeholders in an all-day workshop. This interactive workshop integrated the best thinking of the attendees to formulate a redevelopment strategy for Evans & Rosedale. The Vision Plan for Evans & Rosedale synthesizes community and expert input to direct future revitalization efforts of this historic



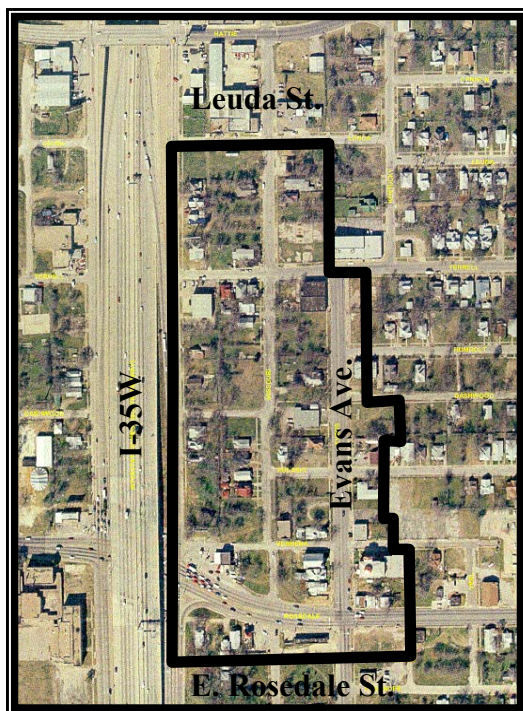
National revitalization experts, the City and Near Southeast community leaders toured the Heritage Center area as part of the redevelopment planning process.

commercial district.

The Vision Plan recommends strategies and implementation steps according to three key elements: economic development, historic and cultural preservation, and urban design. These elements provide guidance as to the desired development projects and land uses, design and function of the built environment, strategies to encourage the desired types of development, and recommended next steps. The successful completion of the District project hinges upon leveraging private sector investment by focusing on opportunities and assets unique to each element.

BACKGROUND

Evans & Rosedale has historically functioned as a commercial and social center for the African-American community, dating back to the 1930s and '40s. The Near Southeast neighborhood is one of the few original African-American communities remaining in Fort Worth. This area has supported many of Fort Worth's African-American entrepreneurs, social activists, and artists. Historians interested in the accomplishments of Fort Worth's African-American residents have studied Evans Avenue and the adjacent Near Southeast neighborhoods. Local architectural landmarks are symbolic reminders of the prosperous period before disinvestment transformed the Near Southeast and other central city neighborhoods. The revitalization of this African-American cultural center anchors the future economic prosperity of the Near



This aerial photo of the District study area reveals many vacant lots, which resulted from disinvestment but create opportunities for redevelopment.

Southeast with its rich cultural roots.

Because of this district's importance to the overall economic health of the Near Southeast, the Medical District, and Downtown, much public and private sector effort has gone into creating an overall redevelopment vision for Evans & Rosedale. The vision calls for the District to serve as a "gateway" linking the Medical District on the west and the Downtown to the northwest to the historic neighborhoods to the east. East Rosedale becomes a beautiful landscaped boulevard leading east to Texas Wesleyan University and west to the Medical District. A mix of uses, such as retail, professional office, medical, community retail, restaurants, jazz and blues music venues, and residential not only serve the surrounding historic community but also serve as destination locations for the region.

Evans Avenue becomes a marketplace of shops, community services and institutions that celebrate the rich African-American heritage of Fort Worth. The buildings, streetscape, public plazas, and other amenities have a consistent urban design relating to The District's historic ties and encourage pedestrian use of the district during the day and night. Evans & Rosedale will serve as an important center for jobs and services as well as a destination for Tarrant County residents and tourists desiring to experience authentic food, art, goods, and music from the African-American culture.

The foundation of this vision rests upon the physical, geographic, community, and financial resources tailored to attract private sector partners that will help make this vision a built reality. Below highlights some of the more salient resources.

- ❑ ***Vacant and underutilized land*** available throughout the district create excellent opportunities for land assem-

bly and innovative approaches to showcase the unique urban design, historical, and cultural features of the District.

- ❑ The adaptive reuse of the existing ***architecturally and historically significant building stock*** can integrate the overall District development concept.
- ❑ ***An array of financial incentives*** can be creatively packaged to appropriately phase-in infrastructure and site improvements, new construction, and renovation of Evans & Rosedale commercial and residential development, as well as attract the appropriate tenant mix.
- ❑ The City of Fort Worth and Texas Department of Transportation have identified as a priority ***the future widening of East Rosedale*** from I-35W to US 287.
- ❑ A pending EDA grant for \$1.5 million would fund ***streetscape enhancements along Evans Avenue***.
- ❑ Evans & Rosedale greatly benefits from its ***strategic location*** just off the East Rosedale/I-35W exit, adjacent to the Medical District to the west and Near Southeast residential and commercial districts to the east, and close proximity to Downtown.
- ❑ ***A strong alliance of public and private sector partners*** have pledged their time, expertise, and other resources to assist interested private sector partners in achieving the future that is envisioned for the District.

Collaborative efforts between the community and development partners can best apply these resources to make Evans & Rosedale an urban district of quality jobs and community services.

The planning process conducted in July 2000 is an important example of the civic efforts to

revitalize Evans & Rosedale. The recommendations that follow incorporate and reinforce prior and ongoing revitalization efforts concerning the development of the District. One current revitalization project is the renovation of James E. Guinn School, scheduled for completion in the Fall of 2000. Located on southwest corner of I-35W and Rosedale, adjacent to the District, the renovated Guinn School will house the Business Assistance Center (BAC) campus. It will provide resources to entrepreneurs and individuals interested in business ventures that will contribute to the future growth and development of the Near Southeast.



Located on southwest corner of I-35W and Rosedale, adjacent to the District, the renovated Guinn School will house the Business Assistance Center (BAC) campus. This rendering depicts how the site could look after renovation is completed.

The Vision Plan also builds upon past studies. Over the last decade, the Near Southeast and The District area have been the subject of a number of reports and streetscape designs. Other documents, such as federal grant applications, have included the Near Southeast area as part of studies focusing on redevelopment issues of broader geographic areas, such as neighborhoods and growth centers within Loop 820. Many of these past studies identify the needs and assets of the Near Southeast community and recommend action steps to meet those needs. More recent studies have begun to develop the general framework for the Evans & Rosedale District concept as part of larger revitalization strategies. *Appendix*

A: Overview of Past Studies Relating to the Near Southeast: 1990-2000 generally describes the purpose and content of those studies.

This Vision Plan specifically defines the community's revitalization vision for Evans & Rosedale and outlines how strategic partnerships can achieve the vision. The study gives guidance on establishing the District by analyzing three main components of the redevelopment concept: economic development, historic and cultural preservation, and urban design. Each element lays out redevelopment strategies and implementation steps that, if done in concert with other elements, rebuild the Evans & Rosedale Business and Cultural District in accordance with community aspirations.